

January 18, 2005

National Marine Fisheries Service  
Northeast Regional Office  
Attention: Patricia Kurkul  
One Blackburn Drive  
Gloucester, MA 01930-2298

New England Fishery Management Council  
Attention: Paul Howard, Executive Director  
50 Water Street  
Newburyport, MA 01950

Dear Ms. Kurkul and Mr. Howard:

In accordance with our responsibilities under Section 309 of the Clean Air Act and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) has reviewed the National Marine Fisheries Service's (NMFS) Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (FSEIS) supporting Amendment 2 to the Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (CEQ # 040195).

Amendment 2 was developed to address a number of issues that have arisen since implementation of the original Monkfish Fishery Management Plan (FMP) in 1999. The goals and objectives for the amendment as identified by the New England Fishery Management Council include: 1) prevention of overfishing and rebuilding overfished stocks as necessary; 2) addressing problems identified at the time of implementation of the FMP; 3) improving data collection and research on monkfish; 4) addressing deficiencies in meeting requirements of the Magnuson-Stevens Fishery Conservation and Management Act; 5) addressing protected resources and fishery interactions, and 6) reducing the complexity, where possible, of the FMP.

EPA expressed a lack of objections (LO rating) to the Draft SEIS due to the overall benefit of the proposed action. Based on our review of this FSEIS, the majority of the questions we raised on the DSEIS have been explained. Additionally, neither the proposed action nor the resulting potential environmental impacts have changed. Accordingly, we continue to have no objections to the implementation of the project as proposed.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this Final Supplemental EIS. We also look forward to reviewing future documents related to this project. The staff contact for this review is

Matthew Harrington and he can be reached at (202) 564-7148.

Sincerely,

/s/

Anne Norton Miller  
Director  
Office of Federal Activities

cc: Steve Kokkinakis, NOAA Office of Strategic Planning  
John Hansel, NMFS Office of Sustainable Fisheries  
David Tomey, NMFS Regional Administrator Office